

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6749

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION ONE OF TWO PORT OF SPAIN 1898

E.O. 11652: DECONTROL DEC 31, 1976

TAGS: OGEN, TBIO, AFSP, PAHO, TD, XL

SUBJECT: OPRED: HEW PROPOSAL TO BASE EPIDEMIOLOGIST AND
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER IN PORT OF SPAIN

REF: A. STATE 159615; B. POS 1772; POS 1789

SUMMARY. WELCOME ASSIGNMENT OF USG PERSONNEL FROM USPHS TO
EXPANDED EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PROGRAM AT TRINIDAD REGIONAL VIRUS
LABORATORY. STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT THESE PERSONNEL BE ASSIGNED
UNDER PAHO AUSPICES BUT STAND READY TO FACILITATE ADMINISTRATIVE
ARRANGEMENTS IF IT IS JUDGED NECESSARY THAT THEY BE ASSIGNED
TO US MISSION. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE EMBASSY'S LATEST COMMUNICATION THIS SUBJECT WE HAVE
TALKED FURTHER WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS, AGAIN WITH DR. P.I. BOYD
(SECRETARY TO COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTERS CONFERENCE--RESIDENT
GEORGETOWN, GUYANA), AND WITH DRS. GIORDANA AND KARL WESTERN OF
CDC ATLANTA. LATTER WERE HERE FOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING AT
TRINIDAD REGIONAL VIRUS LABORATORY (TRVL) AUGUST 5-7 REFERRED TO IN
REF B.

2. THERE IS NO QUESTION IN OUR MIND OF WORTHINESS OF
EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEY PROJECT OR GREAT VALUE TO BE DERIVED
FROM OFFICIAL USG SUPPORT THEREOF. I THEREFORE STRONGLY
WELCOME THIS INITIATIVE AND BELIEVE IT WILL FURTHER STRENGTHEN
USG COOPERATION WITH CARIBBEAN GOVERNMENTS IN AN IMPORTANT AREA
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OF MUTUAL ENDEAVOR.

3. MECHANISM FOR ACHIEVING THIS END, HOWEVER, IS SUBJECT TO SOME HONEST DIFFERENCES OF OPINION. FIRST QUESTION TO RESOLVE IS AUSPICES UNDER WHICH DR. KARL WESTERN AND HIS ADMINISTRATIVE COLLEAGUE WOULD BE ASSIGNED TO TRVL. OPTIONS ESSENTIALLY ARE THAT THEY BE EITHER: A) SECONDED TO THE PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION (PAHO); OR B) ATTACHED TO THIS MISSION. SEE REF B FOR BACKGROUND ON THIS ISSUE.

4. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DRS. GIORDANA AND WESTERN WERE UNSUCCESSFUL DURING DISCUSSIONS HERE IN CONVINCING EITHER CURRENT TRVL ADMINISTRATION OR PAHO REPRESENTATIVES THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE ASSIGNED TO PAHO. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DR. GIORDANA MAY ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON TODAY TO PURSUE THIS ISSUE FURTHER. DR. MARTINS DASILVA (CHIEF OF R&D AT PAHO WASHINGTON) WAS HERE FOR TRVL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING AND REPORTEDLY WAS ADAMANT IN VIEW THAT CDC OFFICERS SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO POS UNDER PAHO AUSPICES.

5. WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO ELICIT FROM DR. GIORDANA HIS COUNTER-VAILING CONCERNS LEADING TO USPHS DESIRE THAT AFFILIATION HERE BE UNDER AMERICAN EMBASSY. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HIS ARGUMENT (WHICH HE WILL BE ABLE TO EXPAND ON DIRECTLY TO DEPT) BOILS DOWN TO TWO POINTS, FIRST OF WHICH HE PLACED GREATEST EMPHASIS ON. THESE ARE:

A) PAHO AFFILIATION WOULD INHIBIT DEGREE OF PUBLICITY FOR CDC ATLANTA WHICH DR. WESTERN WOULD BE ABLE TO ENGAGE IN DURING HIS PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS THROUGHOUT CARIBBEAN. USPHS DESIRES THAT DIRECT USG CONTRIBUTION TO PROGRAM BE AS OVERT AND PUBLICIZED AS POSSIBLE RATHER THAN SUBSUMED UNDER AEGIS OF PAHO PROGRAM.
B) IF NEED SHOULD ARISE TO SHIFT DR. WESTERN OR HIS COLLEAGUE ON SHORT NOTICE TO MAJOR EPIDEMIC PROBLEM IN ANOTHER PART OF THE WORLD, THE NEED TO GO THROUGH PAHO CHANNELS TO OBTAIN THEIR RELEASE COULD INVOLVE DELAYS.

6. WHILE NOT STRESSED BY DR. GIORDANA (PERHAPS BECAUSE OF EARLY EMBASSY BRIEFING ON SUBJECT) WE DETECT THAT EMBASSY'S LOGISTIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT ALSO LOOMS LARGE IN MIND OF DR. KARL WESTERN, WHO HAS HAD PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE ABROAD ATTACHED TO A US EMBASSY.

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7. FROM STANDPOINT OF THIS MISSION INTERNALLY, THERE IS NO OVERRIDING REASON TO OPPOSE EITHER OPTION NOTED IN PARAGRAPH 3 ABOVE. WE ARE CONCERNED HOWEVER AT ANY APPARENT ADAMANCY BY USG TO HAVE ITS PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO EXPANDED TRVL PROGRAM HANDLED DIFFERENTLY FROM OTHER INPUTS DESPITE STRONG PAHO OPPOSITION UNLESS THERE ARE GOOD AND SOLID REASONS FOR DOING SO. OUR RECOMMENDATION, THEREFORE, IS FOR DR. WESTERN

AND HIS COLLEAGUE TO BE SECONDED TO PAHO RATHER THAN ATTACHED TO THIS MISSION. THERE IS AMPLE PRECEDENT HERE FOR SUCH ARRANGEMENTS. THERE ARE SEVERAL FULL-TIME USG OFFICIALS PRESENTLY IN TRINIDAD ATTACHED TO UN PROGRAMS, INCLUDING IN THE SCIENTIFIC AREA A GEOLOGIST FROM THE US BUREAU OF THE MINES ATTACHED TO A UNDP PROGRAM.

8. UNDERSTANDABLY, THE PAHO AFFILIATION MAY INHIBIT SOMEWHAT THE DEGREE TO WHICH DR. WESTERN CAN BROADCAST THE CDC CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROGRAM, BUT IN REALISTIC TERMS THIS SHOULD NOT BE SERIOUS. HE WOULD RETAIN DIRECT CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE USPHS. CARIBBEAN GOVERNMENTS ARE DIRECTLY INFORMED OF THE USG OFFER OF THIS IMPORTANT FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PROGRAM WHICH THEY HAVE ASKED PAHO TO ADMINISTER, AND THERE WOULD CERTAINLY BE NO INHIBITION IN DEALING WITH PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES IN LETTING THEM KNOW OF THE CDC SPONSORSHIP AND DISCUSSING WAYS IN WHICH CDC ATLANTA MAY COORDINATE BETTER WITH LOCAL PROGRAMS.

9. LOGISTICALLY, THERE APPEARS TO BE NO PARTICULAR ADVANTAGE OR DISADVANTAGE TO EITHER FINAL CHOICE. PAHO ALREADY HAS A FUNCTIONING ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE HERE IN PORT OF SPAIN (AS DOES THE EMBASSY) AND FOR EXPATRIATES UNDER ITS AUSPICES HANDLES NECESSARY CUSTOMS CLEARANCES AND DOCUMENTATION, AUTOMOBILE LICENSING, ETC. FURTHERMORE IT IS PAHO WHICH IS NOW NEGOTIATING THE ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT WITH THE GOTT FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE EXPANDED TRVL AND ITS STAFF SO THE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE GOTT WOULD FALL INTO PLACE QUITE SIMPLY. THIS EMBASSY HAS NEITHER COMMISSARY NOR APO FACILITIES TO OFFER IN ANY CASE.

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